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A Google Wireless Auction Win Will Let Freedom Ring

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By Steven J. Vaughan-Nichols

If you want a cup of coffee, would you buy a mug from Starbucks that would only let you drink coffee from it if Starbucks filled it? Or, how about a mug from Seattle's Best, which can only be filled by a Seattle's Best barrister? Of course not! So why do you put up with it from your cell phone provider?

To me, that's what really matters about Google's lists of requests for the rules to be following in the FCC Auction of the 700MHz spectrum. In Google's [FCC filing](#), the search giant requested that the FCC facilitate new competition, as well as adopt open platforms to give "end users the ability to download and utilize software applications, applications and services."

In other words, it's all about freedom: The freedom to pick your phone from any vendor and use it with any mobile provider. Gregory Rose, president of Econometric Research and Analysis, a consulting firm that conducted a study of spectrum auctions, said Google's potential bid will be good for consumers because of "increased competition and offering a serious challenge to the dominance of the traditional incumbent control of the process...The more challengers to the incumbents we have, the better."

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Exactly.

Of course those incumbents are having a fit about this. "This is an attempt to pressure the U.S. government to turn the auction process on its head by ensuring only a few, if any, bidders will compete with Google," AT&T Senior Executive Vice President Jim Cicconi said in a statement. Verizon Wireless has declared that changing the auction's rules would amount to "corporate welfare" for Google.

Wow, Google's gazillionaires need welfare help. Who knew?

[Click here](#) to read more about Bill Gates' reaction to Google's phone software.

Listen up, AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile, Sprint: Google doesn't even want the entire 700 MHz band to be opened up. Google just wants the same rules of net neutrality/open access that the wired infrastructure already works under to apply to 22 of the total 60 MHz of grade A wireless spectrum that will be auctioned off sometime in 2008.

Is that too much to ask for? I guess it is, because the big four are banding together to protect their monopoly. For all their advertising and price-plan fighting, once you get down to dollars and cents, you still get stuck with long-term contracts at about the same price for the same devices and the same services.

Don't buy that idea? Check out [MyRatePlan](#) and do your own mobile phone and plan comparative shopping. You'll see what I mean.

Once you get past all the new bells and whistles on your mobile phone—cough, iPhone, cough—you may also find today's mobile world isn't as rich as it used to be. For example, as Raj Singh, a mobile industry veteran, pointed out in a [recent blog](#), "In 2001, it was a lot easier to publish your mobile content such as a ringtone or wallpaper or your WAP [Wireless Access Protocol] application onto a carrier catalog. Today, only if your brand is Tier 1 such as Disney or you work through a publisher, will you even have a chance of being considered for a carrier catalog."

So, you see, it's not just the users who are being hosed by the mobile phone carriers, it's the companies that would like to offer you services and content over the existing phone infrastructure, that are being locked out.

Yes, it would be great if Google gets its way and part of the 700 MHz spectrum will be open to broadband. But, for me, it would be just as good news if Google wins its point because it would give all of us something even more important: real freedom of choice in our mobile devices and services.

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